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IAS in Kashmir: Glorifying Occupation

By reader on May 14, 2016 · 13 Comments

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By Rouf Dar, Umar Lateef Misgar, Harun Lone

Once a child is born from the womb of a Kashmiri mother, he becomes anti-Indian by default. While growing up, family alignments, social compulsions or economic constraints may influence his political behaviour but the sentiment of resistance always exists. A child born amidst conflict is never a normal child. At every stage of life his choices are vastly determined by the conflict. Sometimes he may ignore his basic existence and collaborate with the occupier. If Kashmir was to be a sovereign state, both internally and externally, nobody would disagree that most Kashmiri youths resisting Indian occupation, and staying away from the latter's machinery, would have joined civil services as a career option. And it isn't just the fact that the conflict shapes this alienation from bureaucracy, but it is a morally and politically empirical process too.

A Colonial Legacy

During British imperial rule in India, the civil service was introduced during the reign of Lord Cornwallis. Initially, only white people were eligible. But in 1855, the term "Indian Civil Service" made an entry into the colonial lexicon of British India and it was in 1863 that Satyandernath Tagore became the first native to qualify ICS. The number of Indians who joined ICS increased gradually and Britishers were able to create a class of civil servants who were born Indians but served foreign interests in their own land.

Unlike the class of freedom fighters who were educated in foreign lands and resisted British rule, this class of British-ified bureaucrats worked exactly in the opposite manner. It was through this class that the British strengthened their stranglehold on the Indian subcontinent. A fact that was acknowledged by the British PM David Lloyd George himself who, while speaking in the House of Commons in 1935, said that ICS was "the steel frame on which the whole structure of government in India rests". These civil servants were always embroiled in a tussle with Indian freedom fighters who viewed the former as an important apparatus of the British. This prompted Jawaharlal Nehru to historically remark that the ICS was "neither Indian, nor civil, nor service". Subash Chandra Bose, India's Netaji, stood fourth in the ICS batch of 1920. He reported for training but resigned in 1921 and later established the Indian National Army, becoming a legendary freedom fighter.

When India finally managed to liberate itself from British imperialism, the ICS remained as such albeit with a change in nomenclature. It became the Indian Administrative Service. The same exists till date and has been extended to Kashmir.

Theoretical Perspective

Bureaucracy finds its origin in the French word "bureau" which means desk. Thus, bureaucracy implies a system of administration which operates from the desk or table. To break it down further, bureaucracy refers to governance through bureaucrats. Max Weber, the 20th century sociologist, described bureaucracy as a system of administration characterised by expertness, impartiality and absence of humanity. He propounded that bureaucracy is an administrative system designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals. 'Bureaucrats' in the subcontinent is also used interchangeably with the word 'civil servants', which literally means servants of the public; though the Indian media has devised a new name for this class viz; "babus", and the system, "babudom".

As Weber pointed out, it is actually these civil servants who run the daily affairs of government in a country and exercise the power of elected representatives in real terms. Though members of the executive are elected through an election the functions of the executive are essentially translated onto the ground by these civil servants. It is here that civil servants become an instrument of unbridled power. The transfer of real power from elected representatives to bureaucrats is a brazen violation of substantive democratisation principles and a process not consented to, de facto, by the people.

That Sardar Patel would go on to recognise the 'valiant efforts' of these civil servants in uniting India gives us a picture of how vital a position they occupied within the power hierarchy of independent India. Patel even anticipated a collapse of the country had this class not existed. Thus, after independence, the power organisation remained intact, just the nomenclature changed. That's exactly true in Kashmir where India laid down the same base and cultivated an exemplified collaborative class.

Marx becomes relevant here too. He thought of a 'proletariat revolution' against capitalism but not of a 'student rebellion' against it, as students also are exploited like workers, but students aren't directly as exploited as workers. In that case, IAS is a bigger monster and other jobs are lesser evils.

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IAS is neither a class nor a stratum. It is an upshot of the dissection of society into classes (which state uses) and class struggles (which ordinary people do), since its utility is to safeguard the recognition of the rules of an order (an order undoubtedly connected with relations of production, but in need of being prepared in comprehensive terms and maintained by force). So, IAS is "normally" at the service of a dominant class.

How Our Society Sees Them

Coming to Kashmir, these local henchmen of Indian occupation play a more pervasive role in helping to consolidate the illegal rule of India over the insurgent nation. This new breed – Faesal'ians et al – proudly proclaim to be "Indians". And the tragedy of our nation is that they are positioned at the topmost level of the "respect spectrum." Parents fight to turn them into "in-laws". Students get lured into the glitter of this mercenary cosmos. But glitter is all it is. One wash, and the blood begins to seep. Innocent blood, of slain humans. Tears of waiting mothers. Broken limbs and lives of tortured women and men. Screams of raped men and women.

This section of Kashmiri society, and they are many by now., who find no wrong in Kashmiris opting for civil services, argue that a corruption-free society has to be realised and for that we need honest bureaucrats at the helm. What they undermine is that corruption is integral to every society and to think that an independent Kashmir will have zero corruption is a gross misunderstanding. With the demand for independence and resistance against occupation, we are not yearning for a Platonic ideal state. Rather we are demanding a resolution to the longstanding conflict after which any alien entity has no say whatsoever in our political, social or economic affairs.

Some others argue that the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in Kashmir is responsible for pushing youth towards civil services. If, for the sake of argument, we accept that, there arises a visible contradiction in the existing scenario. And that is statistics suggesting that most of the qualifiers are employees of some department or the other before they go for civil services. What prompts them to become civil servants? Preferably to be a well-versed member in the power hierarchy put in place by India in Kashmir. Some of the qualifiers sit for further chances, even after qualifying the exam, just to enhance their ranks! A competition of enhancing prestige among loyal collaborative ranks exists here. And an uninhibited desire to gain power which consolidates foreign strangulation of the Valley.

Who They Really Are

We are appalled at the pathos that drives some people of our nation to embark upon a life of white-washing crimes against humanity and polishing (if our respectful shoe polishers don't find this insulting) a regime that has turned Kashmir into the world's most militarised space. An Indian trooper kills; an IAS guy lays a road over corpses. A school child is shot; a KAS chap builds couple of bathrooms. Maybe that's what their "services" are worth.

Nobody is immune in a conflict zone. Bullets of the occupier never discriminate. The civil servants gain this collaborative power to build layers of security around themselves. They know, in times of duress, they can tap in some offices or dial a few numbers and go into hiding. This is a false sense of holding power. Their dear ones, or society, will respect them not because they have traversed a difficult path but just because acquaintance with them shall ensure some safety perks. This respect and demigod-making is fear-driven.

Civil services is like cotton candy. One can call it "Afsoos Mithaai"' a ruse India is baffling these aspirants with. To go further, they are quite the same as SOG personnel or "Nawbids". They are Malcolm X's "House Negroes". With them, India succeeds in pitting Kashmiris against their own people. The SOG crop attains ranks because of their prior actions. The IAS crop executes actions because of their prior qualifications. They dance to the tunes of politicians who may not possess even a matric certificate. The ink from their fountain pens write 'PSA' on a minor boy's life. And the most important duty they have is to perpetuate the occupation.

On a meritorious scale, how do they rank higher? How can a year, or many, of machine-like preparations prove the worth of a person? How can memorising facts and information like a computer entitle them to be 'great'? They have no merit because they have no moral position that is sustainable. Their ideas change with the lust in their bellies. They see the world in terms of power and money, not in terms of real people.

How They Defend Themselves

The common defense mechanism of the collaborator class to deflect critiques is that "They won't be irrational" and "They want a roadmap, a clear plan for Azadi". This mercenary logic, in its deconstructed form, is not only hypocrisy but also alarming due to the fact that they see themselves as working in the administration of a free Kashmiri nation. The confidence is also reflective of the comfort and acceptance they enjoy in social spheres. On the other hand, people who bravely fight the loathsome structures of Indian domination, from stone-pelters to militants, often find themselves ostracised and relegated to being social outcasts.

Then there is the logic of "changing the system from inside". A struggle against a colonial system, throughout history, has almost always been motivated by the idea of national liberation. In other words, complete decimation of the colonial structure. Any attempts to modify the colonial structure are only cosmetic at best and deceptive at worst. It's like trying to make destructive capitalism more tolerable to prevent large-scale workers' movements. Colonialists and capitalists both try to band-aid the death and devastation they bring, in which co-opters come handy and cheap. Also, in 69 years of Kashmir's military occupation, no 'insider' has ever dared to either rebel or change the system once they are within. Not to say that we expect any justice from this organically unjust system, but how many cases of human rights violations were properly investigated, let alone prosecuted, in post Faesalian (read Faustian) time? Was there any attempt to address the political aspirations of Kashmiris? Or is there even any acknowledgement of such aspirations ?

The third, and possibly the most ridiculous counter-critique of state collaborators is that their only job is to "sign papers", "prepare budgets", "manage the workforce" or "dole out orders". Only that the signature may approve a PSA detention, a budget might be used to purchase weaponry and the workforce could be a lethal group of child murderers. Also, not pulling the trigger doesn't morally or legally (under international law, especially the Rome Statute) absolve one of all responsibility. In fact, the sheer coldness of "administering murder" behind a desk can be more atrocious. Not to undermine the insurmountable tragedy of the Holocaust, Adolf Eichmann also "just managed logistics" for the Nazis.

Why Should We Emulate Them?

What is happening at the family level is pathetic as well. Parents have accepted the IAS' self-image, which is actually false. The 'IAS pull' on our parents is stronger than ever. Parents have made their children a commodity weighed in terms of the intimidating power and money that IAS can buy. How can they, who have fallen under its incantation, discharge themselves from this bewitchment? Parents need to understand that love for such malignant power without any moral conscience and love for a revolutionary life which needs a fair degree of hardship cannot go together. Their love ultimately becomes a decisive force to put children into this ethical gutter. Countless numbers in our community have wasted precious years with the obsession of qualifying this exam.Desmond Tutu famously said that "If in the times of injustice you stand neutral, you are on the side of the oppressor". Parents become a party to that in Kashmir. Not only do they stand by the side of IAS characters but become an active force of oppression as well. Parents bring their wrath on children when some of them oppose the idea of IAS. They own qualifiers and disown us. They forcibly make children believe that an 'IAS life' brings power, reputation, bungalows, cars, and a peaceful life.

Conclusion

This Vichy-like regime of cold-blooded mercenaries has to be dealt not only with rejection, confrontation and critical engagement but also with ridicule. Our society, introspectively, needs to dethrone the false crowns placed on the heads of such people. We need to stop carving heroes out of them. We, by no means, should try to emulate them and lose our prime to this collaborative obsession. We need to get rid of the respect that stems out of fear.

We have to uncover their true faces and reveal the colonial structures that they help to build and operate in Kashmir so that, in some semblance of conscientious conduct, they refrain or, even better, start a total rebellion (mass resignation) and, to be more hopeful and just, post-liberation, face a Kashmiri version of Nuremberg.

But for now, let us not differentiate between occupiers and collaborators. The gun of a soldier on the road is controlled by a bureaucrat using a table in a government office.

—The writers are students at KU and IUST

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13 Responses to "IAS in Kashmir: Glorifying Occupation"

S.B. — May 14, 2016 at 7:45 am

The piece is good, though not better. There is no clue to the solution of this disputed land by Ur greatness but wt I find, is only confrontation to that what U might to dream. It was Ghandhi who converged the diversified movement at early 1920's. I think U may choose the same.

Reply

Zubair Khan — May 14, 2016 at 9:45 am

Excellent work the triad, waiting for Faysal's to lay the final nail in decimating this BS around IAS bollocks

Reply

Udayan Sharma — May 14, 2016 at 10:20 am

I can easily understand the frustration of the 3 authors either because they are well below the eligibility requirement or lack the necessary guts to crack this examination. The only second case could be the lack of understanding for IAS or other UPSC services altogether. My friend , these services are not just a bunch of people doing paperwork but are the backbone of this country. The IAS in particular works in tandem with the state and central machinery And is the head of the district executive. I fully condemn the atrocities and rapes in the Kashmir valley and would never defend those unfortunate instances. But these instances happen in various parts of the country too. we have a lot to improve in our delivery system whether it's justice or policy systems to reach to the bottom level. I think civil services have rightfully gained the deserving status in our society because it's the only way you can improve the system from inside and do something substantially while making and implementing public policy. Like shah Faisal,IAS 2009 has made us all proud laying the path for all of us and his records show he has actually moved things in his postings, actually improved public policy initiatives with transparency and accountability in Kashmir, made representation of Kashmir in favour of Kashmir and Kashmiri people in the corridors of powers in Delhi. He is just not speaking or writing like us, but improving the situation in the ground level actually! Students long for this power. Power to do something substantial. Power to be able to improve things. Power to have a say in the worlds largest democracy. Power to represent the country internationally.Power to compete and improve themselves in the worlds toughest exam where selection chances are 0.0001 percent. The Power to protect their loved ones and the

Reply

social recognition is something that comes automatically. While I truly condemn the things that happened in Kashmir, I think the only way forward is to integrate the people of Kashmir with the rest of India. Can Kashmir become independent peacefully? Can we risk our loved ones lives in the process continuing our disregard to the Indian state which offers great opportunities economically , culturally and all that's needed for our peaceful lives ? Is it too much to ask for ? Cant we integrate ourselves with a rising superpower ? Can't we just channelise our intellect in the right direction?Can't we learn from the past where enough blood has already spilled? How long have we been doing this ? Is it working ? Are external state and non state actors really helping us ? Don't they rape or take our women along ? Or else why do they just drop bombs and in response force Indian military to grow presence in retaliation and then they inspect everyhome and then give motive to some instances like alleged rapes and further atrocities. I am not justifying anything and I cannot. But I think we need to introspect and move on in the right direction

Reply

Aniket — May 14, 2016 at 11:13 am

Long live dissent,

Reply

Ahmad — May 14, 2016 at 11:33 am

By your logic, all government employees should resign. And then after, where shall they beg for food? Pakistan?

Reply

Anonymous — May 14, 2016 at 11:50 am

Qualifying IAS by a Kashmiri is not just another inconsequential competitive feat, as some people portray it, but something of immense positive possibilities. Personally, I have never been attracted to civil services, or a government job, and never applied for anything like that. But it is unwise to blanketly reject greater Kashmiri embrace of IAS as akin to "collaboration." Whether we like it or not, IAS civil servants take most of the key decisions that influence people's lives in profound ways. True the system is beset with immense imperfections, but Kashmiri youngsters must do a cool-headed analysis to learn how worse things could be if there are no natives in civil services in Kashmir. They must sit with some seniors of integrity to understand how everyday work at such levels could be a form of resistance in itself. They must also learn about the immense good they could do to make their people's lives better, safer. — Arjimand H. T.

Reply

Burooj — May 14, 2016 at 12:30 pm

Puts the IAS in some historical perspective. And of course covers some very unsavoury and ugly sides of this job. Notwithstanding a strong writeup, it demonises en mass. I can replace IAS with a chief engineer or a VC or a cricket player, and can easily paint a diabolic picture by refering to the worst examples in each occupation. There is a variegated spectrum of people who engage with the authority their job provides them differently. While some are unabashedly bad, many others are not.

Reply

Aamir Parray — May 14, 2016 at 10:30 pm

it's a biased one ...therez other side of coin too ....u hv deliberately avoided pros ... how can 'revolutionaries' go gaga like this unless they want blood revolution ...inculcate acceptance within u

Reply

Taha — May 15, 2016 at 1:07 pm

LOL. A desperate attempt to justify jealousy and incompetence by a bunch of neo-hipster-pseudo-intellectual-conspiracy-theorist "freedom fighters". 😀

Reply

RAK — May 15, 2016 at 4:55 pm

The authors of this piece of the article should write about the police force which constitutes about 37% (Reportedly) Kashmiri people who are the point of contention > Without their "collaboration" India could hardly have dreamed illegal occupation of this part of Kashmir > In suppressing any legitimate voice of freedom from an illegal rule, it is police force only who play against their own people & add to their miseries, ...

Reply

Sajad Malik — May 15, 2016 at 7:14 pm

Udayan Sharma,
Your "condemnation" of rapes in Kashmir are noted and a Kashmiri feels on cloud nine to hear about your condemnation..I think we should celeberate your "condemnation" but then why should we? Did I hear you say, "but then these incidents happen in other parts of country". So effectively you approve of rape by Indian occupational forces and with a wry on your face, you derive a sadistic pleasure that your media never feeds you such stories and you have an audacity to compare it with "other parts of country" as if Kashmir was India! This is arrogance, plain and simple.

Reply

nitasha — May 16, 2016 at 5:57 am

I smell something burning. Green with envy han?

Reply

Raoof Iqbal — May 16, 2016 at 11:43 am

A masterpiece indeed by d trio. But d whole situation described applies in a case when kashmiris as a whole accept india as an occupier but what I see today is that overwhelming majority has surrendered mainly cz of directionless n visionless leaders n desisting of intelligentsia of kashmir to lead instead of writing pieces in cozy rooms enjoyin branded products of occupiers n last to say d hypocrisy on my part too b4 blaming others.

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